

Safely Surrendered Babies: Report to the Legislature, January 2019

Executive Summary

Since 2001, California has responded to the issue of infant abandonment by providing a life-saving alternative to distressed parents who are unwilling or unable to care for a newborn child. Through the enactment of [SB 1368](#) (Brulte, Chapter 824, Statutes of 2000), a parent or individual having lawful custody of a newborn is granted immunity from criminal prosecution for specific crimes relating to child abandonment if the parent or surrendering individual surrenders the baby at a hospital or other designated safe surrender site within 72 hours of the child's birth.

AB 1048 (Torrico, Chapter 567, Statutes of 2010) requires the California Department to Social Services (CDSS) to report to the Legislature annually on the effectiveness of the Safely Surrendered Baby Law.

The *Safely Surrendered Babies, Report to the Legislature, January 2019*, makes the following findings:

- A total of 88 infants were safely surrendered in 2017, of whom five were reclaimed by a parent. This brings the total number of Safely Surrendered children to 931 since the law was implemented in 2001.
- The Safe Surrender law has been a success, with the rate of abandonments decreasing from 25 cases in 2002 to six or fewer cases per year since 2010. This is an 80 percent decrease in infant abandonments statewide in the past fifteen years.
- One child was found abandoned alive in 2017. There were no abandoned deceased children reported in 2017, the third consecutive year since the law began in 2001 in which California has completely avoided the tragedy of infant death as a consequence of abandonment.

Moving forward, CDSS' Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP), plans to improve reporting practices by issuing an All County Information Notice detailing the importance of writing detailed reports for SSB cases. The OCAP has also developed updated educational and outreach materials in both English and Spanish and will disseminate materials to organizations upon request. The OCAP has been working to increase the visibility of SSB site locations and to promote the SSB hotline, 877-BabySaf. The OCAP is investigating how to best highlight the location of SSB program sites through online mapping programs. The OCAP is also providing updated signage to all sites for display to clearly show affiliation with the program. The OCAP is currently distributing SSB program site packets free of charge to all California SSB sites upon request.

Additional copies of this report can be obtained from CDSS Office of Legislation, (916) 657-2623. It can also be obtained on the CDSS website: www.babysafe.ca.gov.